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17 April 1952

General Matthew B. Ridgway
Commander-in-Chief, Far East Command

San Francisco, California

Dear Matt:

Your frank and thoughtful letter of 17 March has been received and studied. I appreciate your helpful expression of views on the complex problems involved and assure you that every effort is being made to solve them to our mutual benefit. Constructive criticism is always welcome, and the picture as you see it makes a valuable contribution to my understanding.

As you know, my experience in Moscow convinced me that it is impossible by overt means to obtain sufficient worthwhile information on the intentions and capabilities of our principal potential enemy. This conviction is now equally applicable to all satellite countries, including Communist China.

There is no point in bemoaning opportunities lost in the past six years nor attempting to alibi past failures. The plain truth is that we are only now arriving at a sound organization in the Far East, and a mature approach to these problems. Support structures exist, agent networks are being developed, and with continued armed service cooperation we are confident that more satisfactory results will be obtained.

The vexing problem of information evaluation is always with us. Perhaps we err on the cautious side in our anxiety to protect our sources and conceal our methods. However, these principles must be observed if deep cover, long-range projects are expected to survive. We attempt by assessment and continuing reassessment to arrive at an accurate source evaluation which gives customers a useable yardstick. However,

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when information of great importance to national security is received from a single source, that source may be revealed with my concurrence, even if it blows an important network sky high. Moreover, many comparatively low-level operations do not require such elaborate protection and sources may be revealed in sufficient detail to permit accurate determination of whether similar information received emanated from the same source. I am sure []

25X1 [] can arrive at a satisfactory solution.

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That information is also of considerable interest in Washington. We are stressing its importance in field directives. I do not understand you to say that it is of such overriding importance that all our assets [] should be directed toward those targets exclusively. As a matter of fact, I am certain you realize that the political and economic information we are seeking may very well give us a more accurate and timely answer to the question as to whether and when the decision is made for peace or all out war. Our field people have therefore been instructed to be responsive to your desires for military information, having due regard for their long-range responsibilities. I sincerely believe that there is a common sense balance of objectives here, which must be kept under constant review, and your needs will always weigh heavily in that balance. Arrangements can certainly be made to have your requirements regarding targets for collection of information given direct to the CIA representative in the field for resolution on the spot. Further, agreements can be reached under the provisions of NSCID-5 which will permit you to develop operations essential to the security of your command. The entire problem of activities in both peace and war is being reexamined here. In the meantime, through the services of a somewhat strengthened and broadened [] you would have an instrument that could be developed into an effective clandestine collection unit for the type of information you require in the field of combat operations.

Your letter of recent date on communications intelligence leads me to believe we are on the road to a more satisfactory solution of that problem in your area.

Faithfully,

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 Distribution:

Orig & 1 - Addressee
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10/ [Signature]
 Walter B. Smith
 Director

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